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China Expert Reflects On Economic, Political And Cultural Changes Since Tiananmen Square Massacre

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DURHAM, N.H. -- Nearly two decades ago a lone student stood in front of a column of tanks in Tiananmen Square in defiance to China's military crackdown of pro-democracy protestors on June 4, 1989. In some ways, the China today is a much different country, but in other ways, not much has changed since the massacre that left an estimated 800 people dead.

According to Lawrence C. Reardon, associate professor of political science at the University of New Hampshire, China has undergone a major cultural transformation since 1989 that reflects capitalistic changes taking place in Chinese society.

"Western ideas are now more generally accepted and intermingled with Chinese concepts of culture, whether it be in the artistic sphere, architecture, or the media. While there is by no means the open free media that we enjoy in the United States, the discussions taking place in China's media on events is far more engaging and not quite as propagandistic. While people are unable to directly attack the government, they can address some of the more egregious aspects of society," says Reardon.

In addition, yearly annual growth rates of 9 to 10 percent have radically changed China's economy, Reardon says. "The demand for Chinese-made goods has resulted in a tremendous economic transformation of China's economy, which even reaches the interior provinces. It is almost passé to talk about the amazing changes in China's coastal cities."

"The demand for building materials and other production inputs has had a major impact on the world economy. While improving the livelihood of many Chinese, there also are problems such as unemployment of former state enterprise employees, corruption and pollution," he says.

Political change is not present at top of the government, but Reardon says change can be seen at the grass roots with greater participation in local elections.

Reardon is an expert on Chinese foreign economic policy, with special emphasis on elite politics and development strategies. He is currently researching elite strategies in opening China's economy to the outside world in the 1980s. He has published *The Reluctant Dragon: Crisis Cycles in Chinese Foreign Economic Policy*, and translated two volumes of Chinese foreign economic policy documents. He is a research associate at the John King Fairbanks Center for East Asian Studies at Harvard University and coordinator of Asian Studies at the University of New Hampshire.

EDITORS AND REPORTERS: Reardon is available for interviews at 603-862-1858 and

chris.reardon@unh.edu beginning Wednesday, May 31, 2006.